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City of South Bend Newsletter

February 2005

Letter from the Mayor

Dear Neighbors:

I am pleased to report that we are continuing our emphasis on important environmental stewardship programs by partnering with Elkhart and Mishawaka to study the effect of combined (storm and sanitary flow in the same pipe) sewage overflows (CSOs) on the water quality of the Saint Joseph river. This proactive "watershed" approach will help us maintain and improve the quality of our river, one of our most important natural resources.

A Storm Water Management Master Plan was completed after surveying our customers in 2003. This plan addresses the long standing problem of basement backups during heavy rain events. The 30 year plan has been reduced to 10 years with construction beginning this year. Separating the storm water from the sanitary flow will relieve the backup issues and give us the added benefit of reducing the volume of sewage that overflows into the St. Joseph River during these storm events. This is a win for the residents who have experienced basement backups and for the positive environmental impact on our river.

Combined sewers are not just a local problem. Over 100 communities in Indiana are faced with this dilemma and they represent about 10% of the national CSO problem. This is an historic issue that dates back 100+ years to the earliest development of indoor plumbing and public sewer systems.

Over the last fifteen years, South Bend has been proactive in researching and applying many strategies for improving the handling of our storm water. We developed our "CSO Operational Plan" in 1989 focusing on the EPA's "nine minimum controls". In 1996, we received a national second place award from US EPA for this effort. Our program was also used as a "case study" in a Federal Guidance Document and applauded in an Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) newsletter.

During the 1990s the City spent over \$30 million improving the collection system and eliminating 9 combined sewer overflow chambers. Another \$50 million was spent upgrading the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Storm related discharges to the river were reduced by 14%. Computer models and sample analysis show that fish and other aquatic life are prospering in our river as a result of our industrial pretreatment program. The only pollutant of concern from CSO discharges is bacteria, which during storm events is raised to high levels in the river.

In 2003, we established an Advisory Committee to provide citizen input and recommendations on a plan to further reduce the impacts of CSOs. This Committee, made up of 18 citizens, represents large and small businesses, environmental groups, and neighborhoods. Throughout the process, members have shown a keen understanding of the issues and offered valuable advice which led to a phased approach in our Long Term Control Plan for CSOs. The Plan was submitted to the State for approval in December.

Phase I of the plan calls for a sewer separation program that will account for a 40% reduction of the wet weather overflows into the river. While alternatives for Phase II were analyzed for cost and effectiveness, projects were not committed to until the effects of Phase I can be monitored and other information concerning the water quality standards can be determined.

Phase I has been projected to cost \$117 million. Phase II will cost more. Currently, our average residential sewer bill is \$17.57 per month for 5,600 gallons of water used. This average charge is well below sewer charges for most communities in Indiana. However, this rate does not allow for the capital improvements necessary to meet federal guidelines for CSO and stormwater management.

The Advisory Committee will now turn its focus on ways to finance this plan, including future sewer rate increases. They will review our financing options. How

should a rate increase be structured? Should the increase be made in one change or phased in over a number of years? Are there alternate ways of financing these projects? Ultimately, these questions and others will generate thoughtful recommendations for the City and the public to consider as we continue to bring this information to the community. I appreciate the efforts of the community volunteers on the Advisory Committee as well as our staff. This is good stewardship and good government.

Stephen J. Luecke
Mayor

Combined Sewer Overflow Public Notification Program

The City of South Bend has developed a public notification program regarding the potential health impacts of combined sewer overflows (CSOs). The goals of the public notification program are to notify interested residents when wet weather sewer overflows are likely to occur, to educate them about health hazards associated with wet weather overflows in our streams, and to enable them to protect themselves and their families from those hazards.

The public is invited to sign up for an email notification of potential CSO discharges at www.ci.south-bend.in.us/PublicWorks/Wastewater/wq/csonotify2.html or by calling 574-277-8515 ext 28 to get a recorded message on current overflow conditions.

After a rainstorm or snowmelt, you should avoid contact with streams in the combined sewer area for at least 72 hours. Signs are posted along our waterways to identify wet weather overflow outfalls and areas where contact with water could be hazardous.

Visit the City of South Bend online at www.ci.south-bend.in.us

Halina Poetry Prize Honors Sister City



Mayor Stephen J. Luecke announced the City of South Bend's first annual Halina Poetry Prize winners at his State of the City Address on Monday, January 24, 2005. The Halina Poetry Prize, a poetry contest for high school students, was designed to showcase area students' literary talent and to honor South Bend's Sister City, Czêstochowa, Poland.

The contest has been a great success! A total of 244 entries were received from students from seven South Bend public, private and parochial high schools. The top prize, the Halina Award, was given to Amber Eslinger, a 10th grader and participant in Riley High School's creative writing program. First Place was awarded to Teshaun Massey, 12th grade, also of Riley. Honorable Mentions were awarded to Brittany Nicole Fisher, 9th grade, of Clay High School, Nausheen Shaikh, 12th grade, of Clay, Ashley Petersen 10th grade, of Riley, and Lauren LaPierre, 12th grade, of Riley. The top 20 poems in each age category have also been selected for inclusion in the 2005 Halina Poetry Prize Chapbook.

The City of South Bend would like to thank the sponsors of the 2004-2005 Halina Poetry Prize contest for their generosity. Sponsors include the University of Notre Dame Nanovic Institute for European Studies, Indiana University South Bend International Programs Fund, The Public Education Foundation, Chopin Fine Arts Club and Erasmus Books.

Mayor Luecke and the City would also like to thank the members of the Halina Poetry Prize Committee: Dr. Gabrielle Robinson, Committee Chair, IUSB International Programs; Mike Amato, *No Exit* magazine; Nancy Botkin, IUSB English Department; Conrad Damian, Washington High School; Jacquee Dickey, Representative of Studio Art Classes; Howard Dukes, South Bend Tribune; Mary Sue Freitag, Chopin Fine Arts Club; Bonny Hoover, Clay High School; Patricia Jones, South Bend Area Music Teachers' Association; Ken Peczkowski, Griffon Bookstore. All poems were anonymously judged by committee members.

The Halina Poetry Prize contest was created to help build and strengthen the connection area youth feel to our Sister City, Czêstochowa and to encourage their participation in the arts. The Halina Poetry Prize was named in honor of Halina Poswiatowska who was born in Czêstochowa on May 9, 1935. She wrote poetry from a young age and published three volumes before her death at the age of 32. Her poetry is still highly regarded in Poland.

The City of South Bend and the Halina Poetry Prize Committee would like to thank area high schools for their participation and in particular the English teachers who encouraged and facilitated student contributions. The second annual Halina Poetry Prize contest will be launched at the start of the 2005-2006 school year.

Important Cold Weather Safety Information - Help Save a Life!

Carbon monoxide poisoning and fire can kill! Carbon monoxide comes from vehicles, gas grills, fireplaces and faulty heating appliances. Never idle the car in a garage and do not use a gas oven to heat your home. Carbon monoxide poisoning can cause headaches, dizziness, fatigue, shortness of breath, confusion and nausea. If you think you have carbon monoxide poisoning, get fresh air immediately and go to an emergency room. It is also important to install smoke alarms on every level of your home and near or in each bedroom. Smoke alarms give you the chance to escape and reduce the risk of dying from fire by 50%. Call the Fire Department at 235-9255 if you need help installing a smoke alarm.

SI USTED NO ENTIENDE INGLÉS Y NECESITA AYUDA PARA TRADUCIR ESTE DOCUMENTO, O SI TIENE ALGUNA PREGUNTA, POR FAVOR LLAME AL SR. FEDERICO THON (ASISTENTE DEL ALCALDE) AL TELÉFONO (574) 235-5858 X 1000.

Roundabouts Will Improve Traffic Flow on Portage Ave.

The City of South Bend is launching an exciting project this construction season to improve traffic flow and safety in a cost effective manner along north Portage Avenue. Two roundabouts will be constructed at Portage's intersections with Ribourde Drive and Lathrop Avenue. The roundabout at Lathrop will include the Highland Cemetery entrance.

Each roundabout will be a circular 4-way intersection with a landscaped island in the center. The important thing to know about roundabouts is that traffic flows in a counter-clockwise direction. Yield signs control each entrance into roundabouts. All turns that drivers make when entering and exiting a roundabout are right turns. Drivers inside the roundabout have the right-of-way over any driver entering the roundabout.

Roundabouts were chosen for these intersection improvements because they are safer than traditional 4-way stops, especially during periods of high volume traffic. Roundabouts are designed to keep speeds low and there is no opportunity for drivers to run a stop sign or traffic light. There will also be fewer delays in low-traffic periods because drivers do not have to stop to enter the intersection. Roundabouts are also less expensive to maintain because they do not require electricity to operate traffic signals.

The City is investing in additional improvements that extend from Lathrop Avenue to the bridge just south of Cleveland Road to further enhance the Portage Avenue Corridor. A bikeway/walkway will be installed on the west side of Portage between the two roundabouts and on the east side of Portage from Boland Drive to the bridge over the Toll Road. A signalized intersection will be added at Portage Avenue and Portage Way including the entrances to Indian Springs Apartments and Portage Manor.

The City has received design approval from the Indiana Department of Transportation to use federal dollars to accomplish this project. Federal dollars will cover 80% of the total project cost of \$3.5 million with a 20% local contribution.